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ABSTRACT

The San Francisco Consortium, composed of the University of California Medical Center, the University of San Francisco, San Francisco State College, Golden Gate College, and City College of San Francisco, is based on geographic proximity rather than on similarity of goals among member institutions. The author of this study has made several statements, or hypotheses, about the nature of interinstitutional programs and has used the San Francisco Consortium as a case study against which to test and highlight each statement. (RC)

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Interinstitutional Cooperation in the Urban City:

Some Hypotheses and a Case Study

by

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Background

Institutions of higher education have been engaged in cooperative or joint ventures for many years. However, since the early 1950's, these arrangements have increased in number, diversity, size, and degree of formality. Whereas initially cooperation existed mainly in the area of athletics, today every phase of college and university operation has experienced the influence and benefits of interinstitutional cooperation.

The basic motivations for cooperation which were articulated in the 1950's were the problems created by increased enrollments, financial limitations, and faculty shortages. [10:2-4] Cooperation was seen as producing efficiency and economy of operation through sharing of physical and personnel resources and through avoiding duplication of programs and specialized facilities. The responses to this basic philosophy have been highly creative and diverse as well as numerous. A 1967 U. S. Office of Education report catalogued well over 1000 existing consortiums ranging in members from two to forty and in scope from local to international. [11]

The Urban Consortium

Interinstitutional cooperation can be measured or analyzed on a number of scales. Looking at the types of institutions, two major patterns are immediately obvious. Much cooperation exists among institutions which are quite similar, such as private liberal arts colleges (Example: Swarthmore,

Haverford, and Bryn Mawr) or state universities (Example: Council of Ten of the Big Ten universities), and between strong northern liberal arts institutions and southern negro colleges.

The concept of cooperation among institutions in geographical proximity to each other, while not new, does not seem to have received the attention and emphasis until the 1960's. Even today, interinstitutional cooperation among all the major institutions of higher education in an urban area is not common. The mixing of public colleges and universities, private and denominational liberal arts colleges, and community colleges is a new challenge in the concept of cooperation. Perhaps because of the diversity of members, perhaps because of the range of problems in urban areas, urban consortiums have defined a broad role for themselves, ranging beyond the traditional area of interinstitutional cooperation and attempting to bring the combined resources to bear on urban problems.

Thus, the urban consortium moves higher education forward into some non-traditional areas breaking away from the "ivory tower" of non-involvement in specific problems in immediate proximity to the institutions. The challenges and problems in such innovation are numerous. There are forces pulling urban institutions together and forces driving them apart.

A number of statements can be made about the nature of interinstitutional cooperation. Each has a degree of predictive quality to it in measuring the potential success of a venture into cooperation in an urban setting. Together, perhaps, they can provide some guidelines and force some critical thinking by individuals contemplating the formation of an urban consortium or attempting to assess an existing one.

After stating each hypothesis, the San Francisco Consortium will be used as a case study against which to test and to highlight each statement. This organization is composed of the University of California San Francisco Medical Center, the University of San Francisco, San Francisco State College, Golden Gate College, and City College of San Francisco and was incorporated in the fall of 1967. It has been funded from December 1, 1967 to June 30, 1969 by grants from the San Francisco, Cowell, and von Loben Sels Foundations.'

1. The greater the number of problems and challenges facing each institution which are viewed as being solvable only through cooperation, the greater the success of an urban consortium.

Organizations, especially new ones, must justify their existence and show that they will give service and value in excess of time and funds invested. One of the underlying forces in creating the San Francisco Consortium, although never stated formally, was Clark Kerr's proposal to place a full branch campus of the University of California in downtown San Francisco in the South of Market Redevelopment Area. Each of the member institutions had strong reasons for concern in terms of the effect on their colleges and on the balance of educational power in San Francisco. With Kerr's departure, this idea seems to have been shelved on a number of grounds. However, the momentum of concern carried through the creation of the San Francisco Consortium as a creative alternative to the Kerr plan.

While other mutual problems exist, none have the magnitude or urgency of the one just described. While proposed projects such as a joint Urban Studies Center, a data bank, and an academic press all have merit, they

lack immediacy and urgency as compared with the daily problems of enrollments, finances, and demands from various groups.

2. The institution with control of the greatest resources will be the least willing to cooperate.

This hypothesis does not hold true for the San Francisco Consortium and in fact just the opposite is true. The U. C. Medical Center has the most prestige and the most resources behind it as part of University of California. And yet it has been an active leader through Dr. Malcolm S. M. Watts, Special Assistant to the Chancellor, serving as Chairman of the Board of Directors. It is the only member to have made known the fact that it has put an amount of $20,000 for the Consortium into its 1969-70 budget. San Francisco State College, another major size member, has been actively involved in programs for the community and sees the need for a united approach. Current campus unrest is obviously taking full attention of all its staff. The smallest member, Golden Gate College, does not view the Consortium as strongly vital to its current programs and directions.

3. The greater the commitment of the member institutions to other organizations for their indiviudal support and status, the more difficult will be the development of a strong program of joint projects.

The members of the San Francisco Consortium represent the broadest conceivable spread of basis of support. The U. C. Medical Center as part of the University system and San Francisco State College as part of the State College system must work through boards responsible for more than one institution and must both receive their funds from the State

Legislature. City College of San Francisco is part of the San Francisco Unified School District until June 1970 at the latest. While the majority of its funds are local, it too receives state funds and now has a state level board for broad coordination. All three are in turn under the Coordinating Council for Higher Education. Thus while the funds for the three public members come from the taxpayer, the sharing of costs for any joint project is a bureaucratic maze. By contrast, the University of San Francisco is administered by the Catholic Church and supported largely by tuitions. Golden Gate College is private and supported by tuition and by funds raised from industry. Their presence raises the issues of church-state cooperation as well as public vs. private funding in attempting to finance specific projects and in sharing the Consortium's overhead.

4. The diversity of types of educational institutions can be both an asset and a liability.

The San Francisco Consortium again spans the spectrum of diversity by including a research oriented teaching medical school, a state college, a liberal arts Catholic college, a private liberal arts and business college, and a public junior college. Collectively they serve a wide range of educational needs in San Francisco and this can serve as a strength and reason for cooperation. On the opposite side, traditional status problems and interinstitutional views, particularly concerning the balance among teaching, research, and service to the community, serve to divide and to encourage each institution to act unilaterally. Urban consortiums, by defining their membership by geography, must face diversity more than institutions cooperating on the basis of specific function.

5. The greater the ability of an urban consortium to start with several tangible, pragmatic projects of benefit to each member and to the community, the more successful the consortium will be in developing a regular source of support plus funds for more experimental programs.

This problem has the San Francisco Consortium on the horns of a dilemma. With foundation support expiring in July 1969, the Board of Directors and the Executive Director are hard pressed to produce sufficient results in order to obtain overhead funds from the five members. There remains a strong need to show that the Consortium is capable of obtaining benefits which the individual members could not have obtained alone.

Thus far, the Consortium has served as a convenor and organizer of meetings among various individuals from the member institutions and from various segments of the community. Specific programs have not yet been designed and implemented. An application to the Office of Economic Opportunity for a planning grant to design the educational component of the Concentrated Employment Program of New Careers was unsuccessful. From a pragmatic short range point of view each institution sees limited value in the Consortium particularly in comparison with other demands for funds.

6. The greater the number of bridges between the Consortium and community organizations, the greater the chances for success in making a meaningful contribution to the solution of urban problems.

Alvin Fine, Executive Director of the San Francisco Consortium, sees the Consortium involved in all urban problems through being a resource in bringing expertise to bear on issues. He has developed a broadly

representative advisory board and has included on Consortium Committees representatives from all groups involved. This will be one of the Consortium's greatest assets in the long range future when it moves into the project stage of its activity.

7. The greater the commitment of each member's chief administrator to the Consortium concept, the greater the probability of its success in maintaining its continuity of existence and in implementing projects.

At the present time, the presidents of the member institutions do not appear to be giving the strong positive leadership needed to assist this fledgling organization in becoming a success. While a number of individuals were influential in creating the Consortium, it was not the idea of the five chief administrators but rather an idea sold to them by faculty and staff desiring greater institutional involvement in urban problems. The threat of a U.C. downtown campus and politics of such an organization compelled them all to give their approval to the initial planning stage. However, their continued commitment is needed. An institution's staff will devote the amount of time and interest that the president indicates is desirable. While the board commits the institution's funds, only the president can make the request. He alone assigns the institution's staff to such a project. Thus, his leadership is crucial to the Consortium's success.

Conclusion

The San Francisco Consortium is in the difficult position of trying to "crawl, walk and run" all at the same time. Creating the organization was simple by comparison with keeping it alive. The heavy pressure of worrying about future funds dampens enthusiasm among the Board members. Planning for the future is difficult even under ideal circumstances but not with a constant time and funds pressure.

It is unrealistic to expect each member to carry his fair share of the present overhead until concrete programs have been designed and started. While foundations often view their funds as seed money, they must be made to see the long range value of the Consortium and the impossibility of immediate member support given the complexity of the fiscal support for all members. Broader support should be explored to include the total breadth of the community as well as levels of government.

The staff and board should concentrate on implementing projects with as great an appeal as soon as possible and begin making application for funds from multiple sources for 1969-70 and even 1970-71. If after three years, the Consortium has not built sufficient momentum to generate member support, then its design and function should be rethought in line with the realities of experience. Let's hope it never comes to such an end!

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Interviews

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